

disques

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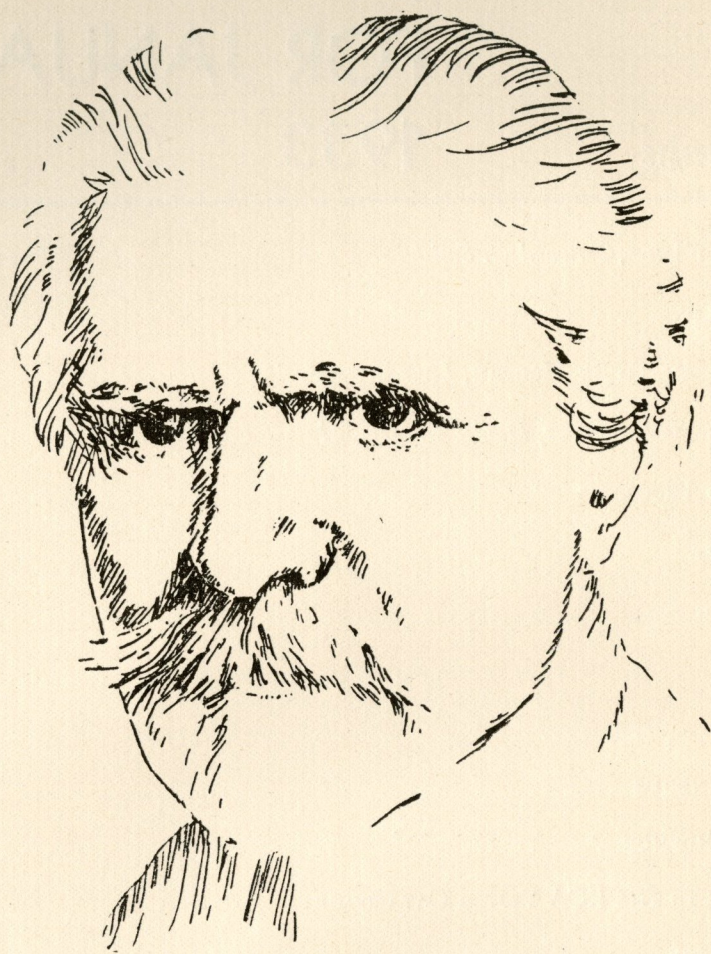
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FOR JANUARY 1933

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VOL. III

JANUARY, 1933

No. 11

SEVERAL years ago, listing his favorite reading matter, Frank Swinnerton included the catalogues issued by the various phonograph companies. Readers of this magazine, compiling a similar list, would probably do the same thing. For there is a very real fascination, hard to explain but vividly experienced, in thumbing through the pages of record catalogues, especially when they come from unfamiliar sources and so may logically be expected to contain unfamiliar material. There is always the chance that one will come across something new, something previously unnoticed, something one never dreamed the companies even in their wildest moments would think of recording. Moreover, music lovers who make use of the phonograph are constantly finding their interests broadening and taking in new types of music of which they hitherto were ignorant, and thus that section of the catalogue, previously unnoticed, acquires a new charm and is suddenly given eager attention. A man, heretofore interested only in symphonic music, becoming aware of the attractions of chamber or piano music wants immediately to know what is available in that category and so turns to the proper sections of the catalogues. It is this that makes the catalogues so unfailingly engrossing, for it is a rare music lover who can assimilate their entire contents at a sitting or so or even at a dozen sit-

tings. There are always sections at first hastily passed by but subsequently thoroughly studied. And everyone who has ever collected phonograph records must know the excitement and satisfaction experienced in finding, in some unexpected place, a recording of a favorite work believed unrecorded. Indeed, if proof is needed of the fascination record catalogues possess, none more convincing need be furnished than the fact that among those who follow phonographic activities there are some whose interest extends no further than collecting the catalogues issued by the companies. Never thinking of buying records, they nevertheless avidly seize all advertising matter relating to records that comes within their reach, and their unceasing requests for all sorts of rare and out-of-print specimens are often a sore annoyance to dealers, already sufficiently burdened with more legitimate requests.

The past couple of years have been hard ones for the readers of record catalogues. In this country they have grown steadily slimmer, and in some cases, indeed, have disappeared altogether; the dates of the publication of those that have been issued have been separated by wide periods of time, during which, nevertheless, the records continued to pile up uncatalogued and hence only too often forgotten. In consequence, it has been increasingly difficult to keep a reliable check on what is available, and

the person wishing to keep abreast of the times so far as the output of the phonograph companies is concerned has of necessity been forced to keep on file a vast number of supplements, special lists and magazines. This method obviously has serious drawbacks, and to locate a vaguely remembered item is often the work of several hours; not infrequently such a search results in complete failure. Many worthy records never receive proper attention; when filed away on the dealers' shelves, they are quite likely to be forgotten and neglected. The past few years, in spite of the economic disasters that have made them so unpleasant, have seen a greater and more worth while outpouring from the phonograph presses than ever before in the history of the industry, but adequate catalogues indexing this tremendous output have been lacking. This has been unfortunate all around, for aside from the pleasures catalogues afford, they have a very definite and cut-and-dried business purpose: there is no more permanent and lively a sales stimulant than an attractive, easily read, thorough-going and well prepared catalogue.



Two new catalogues of extraordinary value and interest—one completed and now available, the other in the process of preparation—warrant comment here. First for discussion is the new RCA Victor general catalogue*, the company's first since 1930, which appears this month. No better way to begin a review of its contents could be devised than by quoting the first two paragraphs of the introduction: "Though not the largest in the history of Victor records, the present catalog is by far the most interesting, the most carefully chosen, and the most timely ever issued under the famous Victor trade-mark. Not only does it include, after a judicious process of elimination, the Red Seal and standard music contained in our last catalog and issued since, but for the first time, the public is taken into Victor's confidence as regards its future recording plans.

"A great number of recordings listed herein are marked 'in preparation'. These are works which have been scheduled for recording or that have been recorded; but for one or more of a great variety of reasons, must await their opportune moment. It is expected that all shall have been released within twelve months."

A hasty glance through the catalogue is rewarded with some astounding discoveries. Impressed with the quantity and quality of the works "in preparation" and startled with the discovery of works long needed but believed out of the question for some time, one forgets momentarily that there is a depression and that the phonograph industry is not exactly flourishing. Thus, by this time next year, "it is expected" that all of the following will be on display in the dealers' shops:

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Adventures in a Perambulator</i> (Carpenter) | <i>Rhinegold</i> : Symphonic Synthesis |
| Concerto No. 2 (MacDowell) | <i>Die Walküre</i> : Symphonic Synthesis |
| <i>A Faust Symphony</i> (Liszt) | <i>Siegfried</i> : Symphonic Synthesis |
| Fugue for 18 Violins (Dubensky) | <i>Götterdämmerung</i> : Symphonic Synthesis |
| <i>Pleasure Dome of Khubla Khan</i> (Griffes) | <i>Parsifal</i> (Complete) |

*THE NEW COMPLETE CATALOG OF VICTOR RECORDS. Camden: RCA Victor Co., Inc. 10c.

Verklärte Nacht (Schönberg)
Rhapsodie for Contralto & Orchestra (Brahms)

Also Sprach Zarathustra (R. Strauss)
Symphony No. 4 (Brahms)



The catalogue offers no information as to the identity of the artists who will record these works, nor are record numbers given—simply the titles, beside them the words “Symphony Orchestra” and the dagger indicating “in preparation.” Presumably, therefore, they have not as yet been recorded, but it is more than likely that most if not all will be done in this country. Indeed, it is possible to make a pretty good guess as to what conductor and orchestra will be chosen for the *Ring* records, the Fugue for Eighteen Violins by Dubensky, and the Brahms Symphony No. 4. What, by the way, is the Brahms Rhapsodie for Contralto and Orchestra? No further information is vouchsafed by the catalogue, and it hardly seems likely that it can be the Alto Rhapsody, already recorded so beautifully by Sigrid Onegin.

At any rate, such an array of music constitutes an ambitious and truly formidable year's program for any recording company. It is a well balanced and sensibly chosen list; even in prosperous times it would cause some astonishment, and that it should be undertaken during the depression by an American manufacturer is a source of satisfaction to those of us who suspected that the recent announcement in the *American Mercury* of the fall and death of the phonograph in this country was a little premature. The undertakers, before arranging for the funeral, had better first catch the corpse—in this case, an extraordinarily lively one! Having now whetted the public's appetite and put it in an expectant mood, it is up to RCA Victor to make good these magnificent promises. Twelve months from now, if the present plans are successfully carried out, the repertoire of recorded music should be notably enlarged and widened in scope by these new works, almost all of which have not previously been recorded, or else have been inadequately recorded, but all of which have been much in demand.

But these are not the only works listed as “in preparation.” There are countless others, chiefly European recordings. There isn't space to mention them all by title here, but they represent the outstanding releases of the Gramophone Company for the past couple of years, and their inclusion in the Victor catalogue greatly strengthens and broadens the domestic lists. A few samples of these records, picked at random throughout the catalogue, will suffice to give an idea of the many striking European recordings shortly to be released over here: Prokofiev's ballet suite, *Pas d'Acier*, played by the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Coates; Elgar's First Symphony; his *Falstaff*; several Mozart concertos (one for violin and orchestra, the other for piano and orchestra); the two Haydn symphonies, played by Weisbach and the London Symphony, recently noticed in *Disques*; the Debussy Preludes (Book 1) played by Cortot; Wagner's seldom heard *Die Feen* Overture by Coates and the London Symphony; and a host of others of equal value and interest.

This procedure of listing the releases for the coming twelve months, which the editor of the catalogue very rightly says enables collectors to “project and budget their record purchases for a year or more,” is heartily to be commended. Never

before was there such pressing need for the collector to have plenty of time in which to plan what records to add to his collection, and in this connection Victor's idea is of enormous aid. It also adds greatly to the interest of the catalogue. Even the best informed collector, searching through its pages, is bound to come across listings of records of which he had never before heard.



Smaller than the editions of former years and lacking the usual pink celebrity section at the end, the 1932 catalogue is nevertheless unquestionably the most engrossing and valuable that Victor has ever issued. Compared with the bulky editions of an earlier and more prosperous period, the new edition seems very modest and insignificant in size, but in its pages there is more genuinely interesting stuff than is contained in all of the previous editions put together. The same general procedure established in former Victor catalogues is followed in the present edition. Certain economies are noticeable, but in most cases they are wise ones, and the whole thing is admirably arranged and compressed into as small space as possible. There are, of course, many omissions—chiefly of popular records—and inevitably there will be those who will be piqued at the exclusion of some of their favorite selections. But the practice of listing the releases for the coming twelve months more than compensates for the loss of some old favorites. And in the main these omissions are judiciously made. Naturally, among the records to be issued in the future, there are some the selection of which seems unwise. Album Set No. 159, for example, is to contain Beethoven's First Symphony played by Pablo Casals and the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra. But doesn't Set No. 73 contain the same work adequately played by Mengelberg and the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra? It is hard to account for a duplication like this, for as a matter of fact neither recording is an exceptional one, and of the two that in Set 73 is somewhat superior.

Before concluding comment on this admirable catalogue, one more quotation from the introduction should be made: "Developments in the laboratory indicate that, while there is, scientifically speaking, no room for further radical improvements in recording, there will be a steady although gradually diminishing improvement in the art as it approaches the limits of perfection. Continuous improvement in fidelity, sonority and surface-quality can even now be noted almost from month to month, and Victor records have reached such a point in development as to make it reasonable to assume that it will never be necessary to remake records dating from 1931 onward, because of possible future progress in recording." Which brings up a matter already discussed in these columns. When are we to have a machine which will properly reproduce *all* the music on our records?



What promises to be the most complete, elaborate and comprehensive catalogue of phonograph records ever issued is at present being compiled by the New York Public Library, under the direction of Philip L. Miller. This catalogue, eventually to be issued as an official library publication, will include both foreign and domestic records, but its scope goes much further than that. "My aim," writes Mr. Miller, "—though I realize it is an impossible one—is to include every recording of 'respectable' and 'fairly respectable' music made since the beginning of time. I want

my files to include every known record regardless of age, availability or quality of reproduction. Of course, I am leaving out the popular music, as to include that would be a little too much. When the list is printed, I suppose a lot can be left out, but now I am collecting all the material I can get.

"I am trying to trace everything to its source, so that all recordings of a certain piece of music will be grouped together, irrespective of arrangement or labeling. Thus the famous Arioso of Bach will be found under the heading 'Cantatas, sacred, no. 156—Prelude.' Similarly, under Debussy, *La fille aux cheveux de lin* will be found under 'Preludes—Book 1, no. 8.' Naturally, there will be cross references to cover every variation of title.

"As to my method of procedure, I began by cutting up the Gramophone Shop's Encyclopedia and pasting each entry on a card. Then I added the list which appeared in the *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* last year and the various domestic catalogues. Eventually I will comb *Disques*, the *Phonograph Monthly Review*, the *Music Lover's Guide*, and the *Gramophone*. Then of course there are innumerable foreign and out-of-date domestic lists to be gone through. As you can see this means an enormous amount of work ahead. So far I have worked down the alphabet as far as Mozart, but still have many unsorted cards. Naturally, then, I can hardly even guess as to the size of the published list.

"Perhaps you could pass the word along to readers of *Disques* that any gifts of catalogs, especially foreign or out-of-date, will be of enormous help to me. There must be many such accumulated in the homes of collectors."



It needs only a moment's reflection to appreciate the magnitude of the task and to realize its tremendous value when completed. The amount of detail, research, wrestling with insufficiently prepared labels (of which all the companies are only too frequently guilty) involved in the work leaves one speechless. Obviously Mr. Miller is approaching his gigantic task in the only proper manner and is sparing no pains in making his work as complete, as informative and as thorough as possible. Such a catalogue has long been needed, and it is fortunate that it is now under way, for if it were delayed much longer many valuable references would be irretrievably lost. As it is, one suspects Mr. Miller is in for many dark moments when, surrounded by an imposing pile of catalogues, lists and supplements, he tries to make sense out of some mysterious listing, of which he is sure to encounter many. Patriotic collectors who have noted with dismay the greater interest Europeans manifest in the phonograph will find comfort in the fact that not only are the most interesting recordings now coming from America but that the most complete and elaborate index of what is available on records is being prepared in New York. The New York Public Library and Mr. Miller are deserving of the thanks (and sympathy) of all interested in the phonograph, and in the meantime the best way to show that the task is appreciated is to forward any rare catalogues and lists to Mr. Miller, in care of the Music Division, the New York Public Library, Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street, New York.



The Hugo Wolf and Beethoven Sonata Societies, having scored an impressive success

with their first albums, now announce their second albums for early release. The Wolf Album will contain songs recorded by John McCormack, Friedrich Schorr, Alexandra Trianti, Herbert Janssen and Herr Husch. The set will include six 12-inch records enclosed in an album, for which the price will be \$12. The Beethoven Sonata Album No. 2 will include the Sonatas, Op. 109; Op. 27, No. 1; and Op. 14, No. 1. These will be played by Artur Schnabel, and there will be a descriptive booklet written by Eric Blom. The album will comprise seven 12-inch discs, and the price is \$14. American subscriptions will be handled by RCA Victor dealers, and the lists close January 31.



The society idea, meanwhile, is being hotly debated in England, and echoes of the battle have found their way into the correspondence pages of the *Gramophone*, the Christmas issue of which, incidentally, is unusually good. While correspondents argue heatedly over whether or not the subscription idea is a "democratic" one, the "Forty-Eight" Society, which aims to issue a series of albums containing the Forty-Eight Preludes and Fugues of Bach played by Arnold Dolmetsch on the clavichord, is being formed; the Wolf and Beethoven Societies, as noted above, are already preparing to issue their second volumes; and there is even talk of forming societies to be devoted to the works of Delius and Rachmaninoff and the playing of Paderewski.

One thing that remains above argument, however, is that the societies that have already been formed have more than justified their existence. The records issued have in every case been far beyond the most optimistic hopes of the subscribers, most of whom probably sent in their names and money a little dubiously and without tangible assurance that what they would get would be satisfactory. But the interpretations have been exemplary; the performances admirable; and the recording carefully and smoothly done. Moreover, very fine booklets, written by accepted authorities, have accompanied the albums, so that in every respect the subscribers have been given their money's worth. Those with more or less legitimate complaints, therefore, are the collectors who, for one reason or another, neglected to subscribe before the closing dates. With those whose finances did not permit them to enroll in sufficient time, we heartily sympathize, and it is to be hoped that sooner or later it will be found possible to make the albums again available.

But at the moment, with the current lists so overcrowded with desirable releases and with the dealers' shelves already bulging with material previously issued, it seems somewhat illogical to protest because we can't all have the society albums right away, too. If the companies destroyed the matrices of the records after a limited number were pressed, as the book publishers sometimes do with the type for limited editions, there would then be abundant cause for indignation. But it is inconceivable that so destructive and absurd a step would ever be taken, and so long as the matrices are preserved, there is every reason to believe that the records will be available again sometime in the future. In the meantime, let the societies devote themselves only to works which could not possibly be recorded otherwise, and those of us not fortunate enough to be able to participate in them at the moment can find plenty of interesting matter on the ordinary lists; and there is always the

not altogether unreasonable hope that later on we can also have such of the society albums as we want.



Last month the Columbia Phonograph Company announced a reduction in the price of 12-inch records. All records in the 67000D and 68000D series, as well as those in the 50000D series, are now \$1 each, and this applies also to those which have the letter G in front of the number. The new price thus represents a saving of from 25c to \$1 on each record. Albums for sets will be 50c each. Hereafter, too, Columbia records will be pressed in the new Royal Blue material. According to Columbia, "the reproduction qualities of Columbia Masterworks Records [pressed in the Royal Blue material] are definitely superior to those of the former black record, and they are more durable." This statement, so far as can be judged from the first samples of the new records, seems beyond cavil. Special praise is due the smooth, quiet surfaces, an improvement over even the old Columbia surfaces, which were always distinguished by a minimum amount of noise and scratch. An attractive catalogue—printed, appropriately enough, in blue ink—is available, listing Columbia masterwork records by composers, together with the new prices.



RCA Victor announces a special list of unusual European and American recordings which could not be included in the regular monthly releases. These records will be noticed in *Disques* as they are received, and in the meantime the complete list can be found on page 489 of this issue.



DANIEL GREGORY MASON, who contributes an article on "Brahms's First Sextet" to this issue, is the well known composer and writer. Born in 1873, he is a grandson of Dr. Lowell Mason, a nephew of Dr. William Mason and son of Henry Mason. He was graduated from Harvard in 1895, and studied music with Nevin, Chadwick, Whiting and others in America, and with the late Vincent d'Indy in France. Dr.

[Continued on page 471]

SUBSCRIPTIONS, INDEX AND BOUND VOLUMES

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CODE

The first letters in the record number indicate the manufacturer and all records are domestic releases unless the word **IMPORTED** appears directly under the number: B-Brunswick, C-Columbia, CH-Christschall, D-Decca, EB-Edison-Bell, FO-Fonotipia, G-National Gramophonic Society, HO-Homocord, O-Odeon, PA-Parlophon, PD-Polydor, R-Regal (English), and V-Victor.

Too Modern To Be Modern

*The New Sibelius Recordings**

By LAURENCE POWELL

When, decreeing that the machinery of our living should run without lubrication, the gods threw dust among the pistons, cogs and cams, they must also have allowed that at least one mortal should make adequate comment on their dire ordinance. And surely they must now realise that this comment has reached most complete expression in the Fourth Symphony of Sibelius, despite the fact that most mortals insist on its being nothing but an expression of despair. This it cannot possibly be, and for two reasons: first, music that is given to an expression of despair must of necessity be narrowed down to introspective individual groaning—the human race as a whole cannot know despair—and Sibelius is so far from narrow introspection that one of the chiefest credentials of his art is that very same universality that made a Titan of Beethoven: second, only a great mind could have conceived this Fourth Symphony, and great minds cease to be great the moment they succumb to despair. The point is that this work could never have been written if it were an expression of despair. Rather than being desperation, it suggests the agony of Amfortas minus the theatricality of Wagner and indeed one recurring passage in the last movement would seem to have musical kinship with the Amfortas agony motif. But it is far more comprehensive than mere wailing could ever be; it is far more healthy and has too much of Melville's Ahab about it to be anything but the strong silent man of symphonies casting a steely disapproving eye on the huddled crepe-draped figure of Tschaikowsky's morbid sentimental Sixth. The Finn's Fourth is philosophy, while the Russian's Sixth is hysteria.

This Fourth Symphony, utterly original as it is, bears a certain similarity to the last quartets of Beethoven, though of course only in a very broad way as to general ethos. In many respects Sibelius towers above Beethoven, if only because of the very much greater mass of musical materials at his disposal, the wherewithal to expression being far more stupendous in 1900 than it was in 1800. In fact the immensity of this pile of musical materials has been the ruin of all but the strongest musical minds of this century. Technique has outgrown expression, and only the biggest minds can wield this technique to the purpose of expression: most can only play with some of it, like children playing with their blocks. They have piled these blocks into semi-symmetrical patterns, but, unlike wise children, they have not knocked them down, but have foisted them upon the world as finished works of art.

The Orientals say "Singer, let not thy art be greater than thy truth." It is

*SYMPHONY No. 4 in *A Minor*, Op. 63. Eight sides. Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski. Four 12-inch discs (V-7683 to V-7686) in album. Victor Set M-160. \$8.

(a) SYMPHONY No. 5 in *E Flat Major*, Op. 82; (b) POHJOLA'S DAUGHTER: *Symphonic Fantasia*, Op. 49; (c) TAPIOLA: *Symphonic Poem*, Op. 112. Fourteen sides. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Robert Kajanus. Seven 12-inch discs (V-11503 to V-11509) in album. Sibelius Society Album No. 1. \$10.50.

precisely because Sibelius never has let his art be greater than his truth, never has allowed technique to stand in the way of expression, that he looms so large upon the contemporary scene. He never has sold himself to any technical foibles such as atonality or polytonality, though if they serve his expressionistic purpose of the moment he uses them deftly in passing. Any material that he cannot use for the purpose of expression, he leaves severely alone. But the tremendous fact remains that he has actually used nearly all known musical materials and used them subconsciously for perfect expression, and he stands glorious as the sole contemporary composer who has done this. Nothing but narrowness resulted from Skryabin's shutting himself up with a few pet chords, and the same can be said of Schönberg for selling himself to atonality. The mere fact that it is unthinkable that Schönberg should now publish a volume of simple diatonic tunes proves his narrowness, while on the other hand the fact that Sibelius can indulge in polytonality and at the same time write simple diatonic tunes proves his breadth. Into his unmistakable and absolutely individual style has gone and has remained everything from the simplest triadic harmony up to the most inscrutable harmony, counterpoint and orchestration.

Sibelius' Fourth Symphony dates from 1911, the same year that heard the first performance of Stravinski's *Le Sacre*. We are always hearing of the latter as an epoch making work, but the next five years will indicate that it was the almost unnoticed Fourth of Sibelius that was 1911's epoch making work and so far probably the century's epoch making work. Its austerity will stand in the way of popular acceptance and for some time it will remain esoteric to the few whose spirituality is substantial enough to enjoy it and whose musical equipment is big enough to understand it. The Philadelphia records are excellent, and though this work gives little or no rope to their virtuosity as a body, individual instrumentalists make all their opportunities as they sing their contrapuntal way through this sombre symposium.

II

There could hardly be a greater contrast between two symphonies than there is between Sibelius' Fourth and Fifth, and yet both are obviously from the same pen. The Fifth is much more easy to assimilate and much more nearly approaches the conventional idea of symphony. In spite of a few passages marked *lugubre* it strikes a note of content. Whereas in the Fourth the thematic material is remote and vague, that of the Fifth is obvious almost to the point of banality, so simple indeed that it would hardly commend itself as symphonic material to Mr. Gershwin. This fact in no way deteriorates the work, because it is not thematic material that makes a symphony, but rather what is done with the material, and in the Fifth we get an excellent example of Sibelius' inexhaustible fecundity in thematic development. After hearing the exposition of the first movement, nobody could prophesy the scherzo-like treatment that was later to be given the first subject. The second movement is a discourse on a tune that might have escaped out of a primary grade song book. The third and last movement reaches, in its coda, a blazing and riotous climax of striking brass sonorities that must make Stravinski jealous, and yet it all grows out of a second subject whose credentials upon first impression would seem to be those of a mauve decade girl show tune! In the

Fifth, its composer treats us to all his most delightful tricks, some of them mannerisms perhaps; we get the Sibelian crescendo riding on a dithering string orchestra, suggestive of an incantation: wood-wind chords that pucker up the ears much as does an unripe persimmon the tongue: brass harmonies that make it difficult to believe that the trombones are not made of iron: oboes and bassoons that wheeze like creaking trees. The short disjointed phrases, almost half utterances, of the Fourth and the quasi chamber-music-like treatment of the orchestra give place respectively to length and profusion of warm melodic material and a rich expansiveness of orchestration in the Fifth. Whereas the Fourth leaves one meditatively disturbed, the Fifth leaves one singing. These Sibelius Society records are eminently satisfactory and since Kajanus, Sibelius' chosen apostle, is the conductor, certainly authoritative.

III

In the two examples of Sibelius' program music included in this Sibelius Society Album we get the nationalist composer as opposed to the more universal composer of the abstract symphonies. Nearly all his picture music, and I call it picture music advisedly as I shall explain in a minute, is based upon episodes from the *Kalevala*, the epic of Finnish mythology, and in order to get the full flavor of the music, one should read this book, which may be had in two volumes in the Everyman edition. *Pohjola's Daughter* is taken from Runo VIII. Vainamoinen, the primeval minstrel on his way back from the Northland, suddenly notices the Daughter of the North sitting on a rainbow spinning. Beseeching this lively creature to come down to him, he meets with refusal unless he can make her a boat out of the pieces of her spindle. Failing utterly to do this he continues his journey in frustration. There is spinning wheel music, but of a completely original kind; there is rainbow music and the music of Vainamoinen's wrestling with impossibility twisted out of the brassy, whose stentorian writhing serves to sharpen the effect of the suddenly quiet sighing finish, depictive of his frustration.

This piece, like so much of Sibelius' program music, is depictive rather than narrative. When it is over one has the sense of having been looking at a picture, while after a Strauss symphonic poem, one has the impression of having gone through a series of events. It is precisely when Sibelius has a subject that is more static than mobile that he succeeds best, and that is why, apart from its being a much later work, *Tapiola* transcends *Pohjola's Daughter*. In Finnish mythology Tapio is the god of the forests and Tapiola his kingdom. Prefixed to the score is this motto:

*Widespread they stand, the Northland's dusky forests,
Ancient, mysterious, brooding savage dreams,
Within them dwells the Forest's mighty God,
And woodsprites in the gloom weave magic secrets.*

In this work, besides the nationalist, we get the poet of rugged nature epitomising the lonely grandeur of his country's forest fastnesses. It is almost Druidical music. Four record-sides based almost entirely on the opening measure, suggestive of a carefully wrought improvisation, spontaneously reaching a conclusive climax, after stretches of comparative monotony, probably intended, make a splendid tone-poem, but certainly not music to be compared with the later symphonies. It is, after

all, as an abstract musician that Sibelius is outstanding and it is in absolute music that his genius helps him most. In the course of a conversation with Sibelius in 1921, he made it perfectly clear to me that he regards his Fourth Symphony as being much greater music than his Fifth, and therefore presumably much bigger than his program music, because the Fifth has much kinship in style with the program music. There is deep significance in this preference because it means that his ideal lies in an unrelenting stark simplicity of expression, an elimination of everything but the barest essentials, and a flight from any concession to concert hall demands. Program music, in its very nature, is poles apart from this ideal, and when Sibelius writes program music he must needs relinquish, to a certain extent, his ideal. A mind that can plumb the depths to the extent of creating the Fourth Symphony must sometimes seek relief by coming out of his philosopher's cell, and when the philosopher does come out among his fellow men, he comes for recreation and he becomes expansive as he tells them with his magic art the sagas of a golden past. It is precisely because of his ideal that he must needs sometimes go in the opposite direction and it is precisely because of the tenseness of his abstract music that he must write program music, and it is only because of the greatness of the symphonies that the program music might seem inferior. There is no paradox in Sibelius, no inconsistency, and his originality is so sane that he is perhaps the only living composer who can be modern without being "modern."

OTHER SIBELIUS RECORDINGS

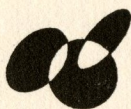
SYMPHONY No. 1 in *E Minor*, Op. 39. Nine sides and KARELIA SUITE: *Alla Marcia*, Op. 11. One side. Symphony Orchestra conducted by Robert Kajanus. Five 12-inch discs (C-67844D to C-67848D) in album. Columbia Set No. 151. \$5.50.

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EN SAGA. Three sides and VALSE TRISTE. Symphony Orchestra conducted by Eugène Goossens. Two 12-inch discs (V-9925 and V-9926). \$1.50 each.

FINLANDIA. Two sides. Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski. One 12-inch disc (V-7412). \$2.

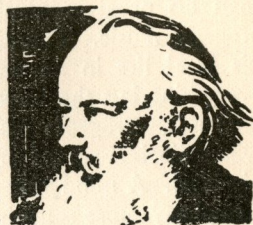
SWAN OF TUONELA. Two sides. Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski. One 12-inch disc (V-7380). \$2.



Brahms's First Sextet

By DANIEL GREGORY MASON

The peculiar psychological interest, among all Brahms's works in chamber music, of the first Sextet, in B flat major, opus 18, composed in his late twenties, is that in it we see him definitely taking the step from childhood to manhood: a step difficult for all, by many never taken, so fully achieved as he finally achieved it by very few. The Sextet marks unmistakably the moment of his musical adolescence. In his first ensemble work, the Trio, opus 8, he had thrown himself, with all the exuberance of youth and of his richly gifted nature, into romanticism, with its narrow subjectivity, its wilfulness, its restless search for novelty of material, its turgidity and incoherence. And he had been acclaimed, this romantic Brahms of the first version of the Trio and of the early piano Sonatas and Ballades, by the arch-romantic, Schumann, in the historic article "New Paths."



Then came a dramatic pause. What, after all, were these new paths to be? Should he go on, in the same impulsive, undisciplined way, pouring out his little personal feelings and fancies, with no attempt to give them any larger, more objective beauty? That was the way of many composers who remain all their lives, like Grieg, charming children. Should he surrender himself to the hypnotic power of his own emotion, and give up, as his great contemporary Tschaiakowsky so often does, all attempt to shape it to more universal meanings? Such were certainly the ways of least resistance, once Schumann's article had focussed attention upon him and opened all doors to him. It took courage, therefore, a rare penetration of insight, candor in self-criticism, and power of self-denial, to turn in the other direction, to retire from the public arena, to find a little post in rural Detmold where he could have leisure and quiet for deep study of the great classic and pre-classic composers, above all to accept the diminution of originality of style which this study for the moment entailed, as the price of an eventually wider, deeper, and finer individuality.*

Yet such a step, given the nature of Brahms, with its impatience of mere personal idiosyncrasy, its modesty, receptiveness, and eager curiosity, its deep craving for universal beauty, was inevitable. For romantic art "bears the stamp"—to paraphrase Emerson—"of caprice and chance," while classic art is "the art of necessity"; "the romantic adds, the classic unfolds"; and there could never be any doubt of a man like Brahms repudiating, once he came to the self-consciousness of maturity, the merely additive creations of caprice and chance, and setting himself patiently to master that art of necessity which unfolds with the inevitability, with the majesty of the reason that inspires it. Such mastery could be achieved only through imitation, through "playing the sedulous ape" to the great models; and it is this sedulous

* See the present writer's "From Grieg to Brahms," pages 181-185; also "Artistic Ideals," the chapter on "Originality," especially pages 110-111.

imitation that determines the character, less individual than that of the works of the salad years but infinitely fuller of promise for the future, of the choral works written at Detmold under the influence of the great sixteenth and seventeenth century masters, and of the instrumental music written in Hamburg between the ages of twenty-five and thirty, under the inspiration of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven: the two orchestral Serenades, opus 11 and 16, the first Sextet, and perhaps also the first two Piano Quartets, opus 25 and 26.

In the Sextet it is far easier to recognize influences than in the earlier Trio, where the only obvious ones are German folk-song, Schumannesque fantasy, and the stale academic conventionality of the fugue copied from an exercise book into the first movement. The scherzo of the Sextet, on the other hand, fairly shouts at us "Beethoven," and even "Seventh Symphony." The finale is made on a rondo theme that might well have been signed "Haydn" or "Mozart," and makes skilled use of their skilful technique throughout its course. And the lilting A major theme in the first movement, an Austrian ländler or slow waltz to the life, irresistibly suggests the equally Viennese Schubert, and doubtless contributed to the pronounced success of the Sextet during Brahms's first year in Vienna.

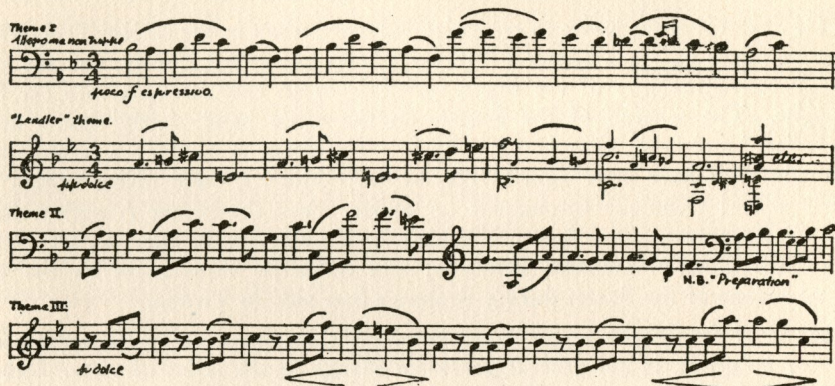
What is of far greater significance, however, than any or all such specific evidences of influence, is the general pervasive change in the point of view. Where, as in the early version of the Trio, the attitude is that of brilliant but subjective youth—in a word, that of romanticism—the method will naturally be whimsical. Where on the other hand, as in the Sextet, that maturing of personality has taken place which makes it imaginatively aware of other minds and hearts, makes it instinctively reject mere secretion of mood in favor of communication, and therefore substitutes the classic ideal of a clear presentation of plastic variety in unity for the romantic caprice, method will necessarily change commensurately.

II

In the Trio, for example, Brahms, like so many young composers, was led on by the purely emotional obsession of his main theme into making the other two themes, not to speak of the fugue, virtually identical with it in rhythm—with a result disastrous to the rhythmic organization of the movement as a whole. Here, on the contrary, it is only necessary to assemble the themes of the opening movement (see Figure 1) in order to realize that while the pace unifies them as it failed to do those of the Trio, each has its own peculiar, strongly marked rhythm, by which in any environment it is individualized. Theme I, like the themes of the Trio, is "thetic": its strong notes, that is to say, come on the theses, or accented beats. The ländler theme is also thetic, but in a subtly contrasting way: the measures being alternately strong and weak, the heaviest notes—the dotted halves—come not where we should expect them, in the heavy measures, but in the light measures, while the light notes come in heavy measures. (It is well known that the placing of light or quick notes on a heavy measure or beat—as in so many Beethoven scherzos—gives the feeling of gaiety and humor so charming here.) Theme II begins with an anacrusis (on the third or "up" beat) and is notably graceful throughout. Theme III presents a favorite rhythmic device of Brahms. As its first note belongs to what has gone before, it begins virtually with an

"empty first beat," so that its whole progress up to the high F, and later to the high A, somewhat resembles a prolonged anacrusis—a breathless, forward-straining effect that gives it a fine momentum. Thus the four themes present the admirable variety of fundamental rhythm essential to a well-coördinated movement.

FIGURE 1
Themes of the First Movement of the Sextet



This leads us to a still more subtle problem of construction. In the early Trio the young Brahms fails not only to invent contrasting rhythms for his themes but also to build the uniform themes into an intelligibly unfolding, dramatically convincing fabric. In the development section especially, the themes seem to enter unexpectedly, as it were arbitrarily, and to disappear without clinching any definite impression; they give, in short, an effect both of monotony and of miscellaneity. Here, on the other hand, with far more various themes, the transitions are so flowing that we pass easily back and forth, and our final impression is no less satisfying for its unity than for its variety. How has this surprising improvement been attained?

If we look more closely at the score,* we shall see that each new rhythm is carefully "prepared," as the playwrights say, before it actually appears. For instance, the rhythm of Theme II, which does not actually enter in the first 'cello until the bottom of page 7, is prepared as early as the last measure of page 4 (first violin part); the ländler is prepared a page before it enters, in the cadence at page 5, measures 10-11; and Theme III, destined to appear in the fifth measure of page 9, is prepared not only very deliberately in the four measures immediately preceding it, but more casually in the cadence of the first 'cello announcing Theme II. If we analyze the psychological effect upon us of these preparations we shall see that they contribute immensely to the intelligibility of the whole piece: they show us what to expect, and yet by remaining only fragments of it make it all the more satisfying when it arrives in its entirety. One peculiarity of their usual location is worth mentioning: they are apt to fall, as in three of the four cases just cited, within the cadences. The reason is that while clearness usually compels the composer to devote the beginnings of his phrases to the themes then holding

* The page references are to the miniature score in the Eulenburg Edition.

the stage, their endings or cadences are available for "plants"—to borrow another term from the dramatists—of themes presently to come. In later works Brahms becomes extraordinarily skilful in thus deftly insinuating in the conclusion of one theme a suggestion of what the next theme is to be and thus carrying us along with him sociably, as befits a mature mind, in the unfoldment of his fabric, instead of plunging us arbitrarily into new phases with childish impulsiveness.

The technical means by which one prepares are modified repetitions. It is surprising how much of the technique of classically objective music can be best understood as modified repetition, either on a small or a large scale, affecting, that is to say, either the molecules or the larger masses of the music. Yet perhaps it is not so surprising either, if we reflect that music, unrolling itself before us in time, can become intelligible only through repetition (comparable to the balances and symmetries of visual art), and that these repetitions are naturally given interest chiefly by minor modifications, at once stimulating and satisfying our curiosity.

This may be seen in the molecular structure of all the themes cited from the Sextet. In I, note how measures 4-5 repeat 2-3, with the significant alteration of the high F, made more prominent by being pulled forward to the third beat. The repetitions by two-measure sections in the ländler are almost obvious, but in the continuation on page 7 of the score the modification of F sharp, heard twice, to an F natural the third time, is a happy instance of this kind of musical fancy. In Themes II and III the play with identical rhythmic figures in different parts is of the highest fascination. Glancing at the other movements, it will be evident how largely the scherzo is created out of such playfulness. The theme of the variations, in the Andante, a nobly rugged tune, makes use of the same principle in a different way. Here the modifications derive their interest from the placing

FIGURE 2
Themes of the Variations

Andante ma. moderato
Part I
f
Part I is then repeated in fuller sonority
Part II
Part II is also repeated in fuller sonority

of incompatible notes close together: the C of measure 6 with the C sharp of measure 8; the C of measure 2 in the second half with the C sharp of measure 4; and the F sharps of measures 5 and 6, making room just in time for the F naturals of the last two measures! It is worth while to go through the whole movement, noting how much of its interest derives from this witty confrontation of irreconcilables.

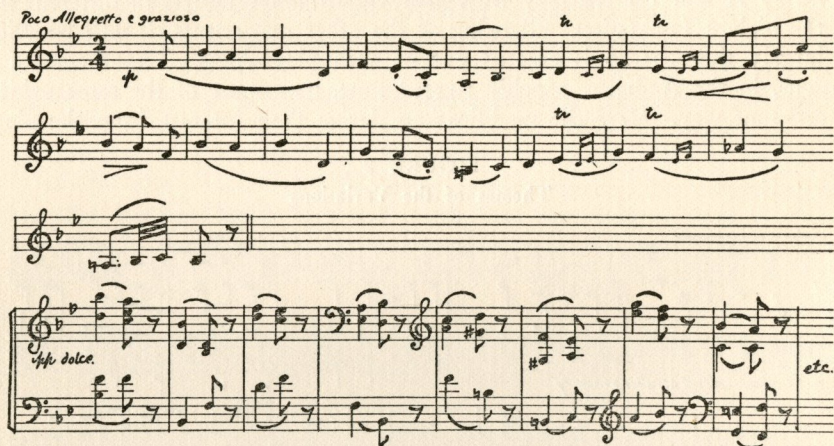
III

"Variations"—the very word sums up the idea of modified repetition. And it is by no means a matter of chance that Brahms, in whose mature work the ideal of interest of detail on a basis of simple and therefore universally intelligible idiom entirely displaces his early fondness for superficially novel effects, was as fond of variation-writing as Bach and Beethoven. In his twenty-four chamber music works he devotes six movements specifically to this delightfully intellectual form: the slow movements of both Sextets, the Finale of the B flat Quartet, the slow movement of the Trio, opus 87, the slow movement of the Clarinet Quintet, and the Finale of the E flat Clarinet Sonata. Moreover, in all his works of the middle and later periods the variation, whether avowed or not, is constantly present as a principle, while even in this Sextet the most interesting variation is not in the Variations at all, but in the finale. It is varied not by complication but by simplification, as happens only with the most thoughtful composers, notably Beethoven and Brahms.*

Here is the theme of the finale, a jolly rondo tune in the vein of Haydn, and underneath it the first half of the lovely dialogue Brahms makes of it on page 61 of the score. The instruments alternate in the pairs of chords, the two violins

FIGURE 3

Theme of Rondo, Finale, and Variation



and the first viola for the high ones, the second viola and the two 'cellos for the low ones, so that the physical ear is charmed by the contrasts of color enhancing and so to speak underlining the essential idea of give and take, or question and answer. But it is chiefly the mental ear that is delighted; for the passage appeals to our imagination and demands its coöperation, since what was first presented as a coherent melody must now be picked up again from the detached blocks

* See, for an incomparable example, the E major section in the slow movement of Beethoven's Quartet, opus 127. In Brahms, compare the close of the Variations on a Theme of Schumann, opus 9, and in the E flat Clarinet Sonata, the quiet variation in which the clarinet takes the bass, just before the Allegro finale.

providing its underlying harmonies. The simplifying variation always has this supreme merit of rousing our imaginations. Only by their active aid can it be understood.

IV

In all these ways we see the principle of modified repetition illustrated in the very molecular texture of this music. In its larger masses the same principle is no less pervasively at work. Compare, for instance, the clear and dramatic development section of the opening movement with the ineffective one of the early Trio. There the ideas were taken up and dropped again as if at random, or merely to exhibit the cleverness of the youth conscious that he had gone through his schooling, and could write a "real sonata." Here the entire middle part of the movement is deliberately laid out in three sections, each with a function to perform in the building up of the dramatic effect. The first, climactic in purpose, is elaborated from the main theme, and extends through three pages, the anacrusic rhythms on page 11 and the increasing sonority and rhythmic agitation of pages 12 and 13 making it constantly more exciting. The second is a charming lull, on the ländler theme, in the remote and cool key of E minor. The third, beginning at the middle of page 15, is the most masterly of all. It is a subtly planned "preparation," on the first three notes of the main theme, so mysterious in their tentative harmonization and their low position on the 'cello that we hardly recognize them until the theme triumphantly breaks forth in the three middle instruments, *forte*, and in the original key . . . As simply and broadly planned as the development is also the irresistible coda, with its tender goodbye to the chief theme and its coy pizzicato play with Theme III at the very end.

The B flat Sextet is far from being as personal to Brahms as some of his later works; in the obviousness of its indebtedness to earlier masters it is even perhaps inferior in a certain narrow kind of originality to the B major Trio. But it is the first piece of chamber music in which, freeing himself once for all from the subjectivity and turgidity of romanticism, he starts to explore the road of classic universality in beauty, in which he was to discover such unprecedented treasures.

[Continued from page 461]

Mason's First Symphony was produced by Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, and his Second Symphony by Reiner and the Cincinnati Orchestra, Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony and by Bruno Walter and the New York Philharmonic-Symphony. His *Chanticleer*, Festival Overture, has been performed more than thirty times by the leading orchestras of the country. Dr. Mason is the author of a number of books on musical subjects, among which are "From Grieg to Brahms," "Beethoven and His Forerunners," "The Romantic Composers," "A Guide to Music," "The Orchestral Instruments," and "Tune in, America." He is MacDowell Professor of Music at Columbia University, and was awarded a grant by the Oberlaender Trust of the Carl Schurz Memorial Foundation to go to Austria last summer to prepare a book on Brahms. The work, which will deal entirely with the chamber music of Brahms, will be published in connection with the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of the composer which occurs in May. The essay printed in this issue will form part of the volume.

Recorded Programs

[Such a vast quantity of good music is now available for the phonograph that quite frequently records of more than ordinary merit are overlooked. It will be the purpose of this page to call attention to such records. Readers are invited to send in their suggestions. Records which appeared prior to the appearance of Disques and hence have never been reviewed in these pages will be given preference. All types and makes will be considered, and an effort will be made to avoid the hackneyed and excessively familiar.]

SCHUBERT "Die Post"; "Wohin?"; "Im Abendrot"; "Die Vögel"

Elisabeth Schumann (Soprano) with piano accompaniments by Karl Alwin.

[One 12-inch disc (V-6837). \$2]

This, in the words of one reviewer, "perhaps the finest single vocal record to be issued during the Schubert centenary year," may now have been completely withdrawn by Victor (they never put it in their regular catalogue) but it is still available as H. M. V.-D1411. . . . The first two are admirable songs from Schubert's cycles, and the fourth is a charming encore. But *Im Abendrot* is a limpid gem: a prayer of humble thankfulness to the Father of all things for the lovely world He has given man, perfectly set in sound. . . . Schumann's interpretation is more than adequate; the accompaniments are quite well done; and the recording is fair 1928.

R. W. S.

BRAHMS

Four songs from "Deutsche Volkslieder"

Elena Gerhardt (Mezzo-Soprano) with piano accompaniments by Coenraad Van Bos.

[One 12-inch disc (V-D2008). \$2]

Somewhere, in connection with Brahms and his arrangements of German folk-songs, I have read that only a great composer can be a great arranger, a dictum which is amply supported by the four folk-songs on this record. Brahms loved the songs of the people, even to the extent of accepting some which were spurious (but which had merit, nevertheless), and he touched their homely simplicity with an element of his own homely greatness when he arranged them. The four here are *Feinsliebchen, du sollst mir nicht barfuss gehn*; *Erlaube mir, Feinsliebchen*; *Wie komm ich denn zur Tür herein?*; and *Meinen Mädel hat 'nen Rosenmund*. Gerhardt sings them in the proper spirit, to splendid accompaniments. The recording is good.

R. W. S.

MOZART

Trio in E Flat (K. 498)

Rebecca Clarke (Viola), Frederick Thurston (Clarinet) and Kathleen Long (Piano).

[Two 12-inch discs (G-161 and G-162). \$2 each]

The National Gramophonic Society has issued many valuable recordings, but none more delightful than this charming Clarinet Trio. Written in the summer of 1786, it was composed for Franziska von Jacquin, one of Mozart's favorite pupils and the sister of one of his best friends, Gottfried Jacquin. Franziska was an excellent pianist, Mozart himself enjoyed playing the viola, so that it is not unlikely that in writing the piece he kept both himself and his pupil in mind. The viola, here not treated as a bass instrument, is given a leading part, the clarinet and piano parts being written so as not to obscure the stringed instrument. The first movement is an Andante, a Minuet follows, and a lively Rondo concludes the work. The three performers, all of them skilful, bring to their rendition a fine enthusiasm and spirit, and the excellent recording is without blemish.

ORCHESTRA



D'INDY

PD-67037

to

PD-67039

IMPORTED

SYMPHONY ON A FRENCH MOUNTAIN AIR *for Orchestra and Piano*, Op. 25. Six sides. Jeanne-Marie Darré (Piano) and Lamoureux Orchestra conducted by Albert Wolff. Three 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

Brunswick gave us the final movement of this work back in August, 1931. Now Polydor completes the set by issuing the first two movements, and it is to be hoped that Brunswick will shortly repress the new records and so round out what would make an excellent and certainly not in any sense hackneyed addition to its catalogue. The late Vincent d'Indy, as has often been observed, is represented very meagrely on records, though there are indications from abroad that this will shortly be remedied—at least in part. Nor is he properly to be designated as one of the mainstays of our concert halls. Once in a while one of his symphonic works receives a performance, but such occasions come only rarely. The common accusation brought against d'Indy—that his music is too cerebral, too dry, austere and cold—simply can't be applied to this warm and joyous work. Hearing it, one is at a loss to account for its neglect in the concert hall. A competent performance of it ought to elicit plenty of applause.

D'Indy died on December 2, 1931, but the *Symphony on a French Mountain Air* is one of his early works—it dates from 1886. Speaking of the Symphony, Jean-Aubry, whose intelligent enthusiasm for French music has done much toward giving the world a proper understanding of the more worthy achievements of French composers, has said that in it d'Indy "proves his own recognition of his own antecedents and the undeniable indices of his personality, rooted in the rugged and massive Cévennes." To Alfred Cortot it is "the most convincing expression of d'Indy's genius," while Paul Landormy finds it "one of the high points of French music." Landormy, in the *Musical Quarterly* for October, 1932, says further of the work that it is "very studied in style and at the same time very close to the soul of the people. The whole Symphony is built on the one folk-theme, which one cannot hear at the opening, presented as it is above harmonies delicious and disturbing, without trembling at this urgent cry of Nature. It is a marvel of perpetually self-renewed invention. The Finale is a really extraordinary 'fête of rhythm,' of exceptional vitality, swing, and force; I think it is unique in the history of music. To bring the people into touch with the soul of d'Indy, it is this *Symphonie montagnarde* or *cévenole* that one should always play, not the more austere Second Symphony."

The sympathetic listener, charmed with the freshness and vitality of the music and exhilarated with its brisk rhythms, will find none of these estimates far-fetched or excessively flattering. So high-spirited and vigorous a work, coming from a composer who has been labeled with adjectives violently opposed to these, is a gratifying surprise. The work is beautifully written. The piano part, considered as part of the orchestra and not as a solo instrument, is felicitously con-



ceived, and the elaborate orchestration is imposing but never merely noisy or blatant.

One expects almost as a matter of course that the Lamoureux Orchestra's discs will be superb recordings of a fine performance, and there is surely no cause for disappointment in this set. Particularly notable is the life-like tone of the various instruments; d'Indy frequently pauses and lets an oboe or a clarinet or a horn or a bassoon momentarily dominate the situation, and the fine, clean recording makes these passages delightful to listen to. The piano part is briskly played, and in this recording fits into the general scheme admirably. If the current lists offer music a little too familiar, try this thoroughly enjoyable novelty; the chances are that you won't be disappointed and will soon be demanding more of d'Indy's work in recorded form.

E. COATES

V-C2448

and

V-C2449

IMPORTED

FROM MEADOW TO MAYFAIR: *Suite*. Three sides and
THE MERRYMAKERS: *A Miniature Overture*. One side.
London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Eric Coates.
Two 12-inch discs. \$1.75 each.

Eric Coates, born at Hucknall, Nottes, August 27, 1886, is well known in England as a chamber music player, and from 1912 was leading viola in the Queen's Hall Orchestra. He has written a quantity of orchestral music and many songs of a light and graceful character. *From Meadow to Mayfair* offers nothing of importance, but it is light music considerably above the average and successfully avoids the triteness and cheapness of most things of this type. It consists of three numbers. The first, In the Country (Rustic Dance), is pleasant but too long; the simple tune is repeated so often that it soon becomes tiresome. The same is true of the sentimental second number, A Song By the Way (Romance), which loses its effectiveness because of its excessive length. The last number, Evening in Town, is a waltz and an engaging one, with a pleasant swing. Occupying the odd side of the set is what the labels tell us is a "miniature overture." It is bright and sparkling. The composer directs the London Symphony in a competent performance of this not unattractive music, and the opulent recording does ample justice to the music.

MOZART

V-11407

ANDANTE FOR FLUTE. One side and
IDOMENEO: *Ballet Music*. One side. Berlin State Opera Or-
chestra conducted by Leo Blech. One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

The imported H.M.V. pressing of this disc was noticed in *Disques* for December, 1931. A thoroughly delightful record, it can be highly recommended to lovers of Mozart and, indeed, to anyone who likes a good orchestral recording. Such beautiful music as this is bound to charm, especially when it is presented with such superlative artistry as it is here. Mozart's biographers assure us that he disliked the flute; all the more credit to him, then, that he should have been able to turn out so altogether lovely a piece of music as this little Andante for flute and orchestra. *Idomeneo*, recently given European prominence through the widely differing arrangements of Richard Strauss and Wolf-Ferrari, may have many

shortcomings as a whole, but it does contain some first-rate music, in which may be included the Ballet Music given here. Bright and clear recording—some of the finest we have had from the Electrola Company—rounds out a charming disc.



SIBELIUS

V-7683

to

V-7686

SYMPHONY No. 4 in *A Minor*, Op. 63. Eight sides. Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski.
Four 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-160. \$8.

Neglected so long, Sibelius seems at last to be getting this season some of the attention commensurate with his merits. Several years ago, when Columbia issued the first two symphonies, works by the composer began appearing on the programs of the three leading eastern symphony orchestras. They had appeared there before, of course, but not so frequently and in such abundance. This year nearly all the orchestras are performing Sibelius' works. In Boston Mr. Koussevitzky is playing all the symphonies in numerical order and some of the tone poems; in New York Mr. Toscanini has given the Fourth Symphony and *En Saga*; in Philadelphia the First and Fourth Symphonies have recently appeared; and similar performances have occurred in other cities that maintain symphony orchestras. The phonograph companies, having ignored Sibelius for so long, seem anxious to make proper amends, and the Sibelius recordings being issued this month add notably to the library of recorded music. Elsewhere in this issue Mr. Laurence Powell writes on these new recordings—the Symphony No. 4 and the several works included in the first album of the Sibelius Society. There is thus nothing to add here, save that one wonders if recording has ever been carried closer to perfection than it has in this recording of the Fourth. To proclaim any new recording to be the finest ever issued, of course, would be pretty dangerous, especially when one considers the already long list of fine recordings now available. Moreover, the shortcomings of present machines make it impossible to judge recording quite as accurately as that, since all the music that is contained on the records is seldom if ever reproduced. We will therefore content ourselves with the statement that this recording, on our machine, seemed more satisfactory than any other recording we know of.

BRAHMS

V-DB1670

IMPORTED

SERENADE IN D MAJOR: (a) *Minuet in A Major*; (b) *Scherzo in D Major*, Op. 11. Two sides. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 855.

GRIEG

V-DB1668

and

V-DB1669

IMPORTED

NORWEGIAN DANCES, Op. 35. Four sides. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech.
Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Dr. Blech, guest conducting with the London Symphony Orchestra, here emerges with two fine recordings of music that one seldom encounters elsewhere, though it is surely difficult to see why. Unfortunately, the Brahms record sets forth only two sections of the Serenade in D Major, sometimes called the *Bonn* Serenade. This was Brahms' first work for orchestra alone, and it was completed when he



was twenty-six years old. The work, published in 1860, contains seven movements, of which this record gives us two—the Minuet in A Major and the Scherzo in D Major. The Minuet has been recorded before, by the Detroit Symphony under Gabrilowitsch, but the Scherzo is apparently a first recording. The Minuet is a rather wistful, appealing little piece, charming in its simplicity; the Scherzo, a robust, full-blooded affair, with some well played and recorded horn passages, moves forward with a hearty swing. For all its freshness and engaging naïveté, it is easy to see that at twenty-six Brahms was by no means sure of himself when handling the orchestra. One has the feeling that the youthful composer was proceeding cautiously, step by step, and perhaps a little dubiously. But it is a pity that Dr. Blech and the London musicians weren't given the opportunity to do the complete work. Judging from these attractive samples, it would make excellent recording material, and given the recording and performance the Minuet and Scherzo receive here, it would make a desirable set.

The Grieg dances are seldom heard, but many will recall the Columbia recording issued several years ago, by Georg Schneevoigt and the London Symphony. Dr. Blech aims for brilliance and surely achieves it; somehow the zest and vigor with which he plays the dances seem eminently suitable. The London Symphony, despite the unkind things critics say of its concerts, usually turns out creditable records, and in this set it sounds like an unusually spirited and competent group of musicians. The recording is admirable. If you are looking for some good light music, these lively discs ought to serve the purpose very satisfactorily.

MENDELSSOHN

V-DB1671

and

V-DB1672

IMPORTED

CALM SEA AND PROSPEROUS VOYAGE: *Overture*.

Three sides and

SONGS WITHOUT WORDS: (a) *Spring Song*, Op. 62, No. 6; (b) *Spinning Song*, Op. 67, No. 4. One side. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech.

Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 653.

RIMSKY-KORSAKOW

V-DA1264

IMPORTED

THE BLACK DOMINO: *Overture*. Two sides. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech.

One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 658.

They must have been pretty hard up for likely recording material the day these records were made. With Dr. Blech guest conducting the London Symphony, H.M.V. ought to have been able to think up something more interesting and better adapted to the German conductor's abilities than these two fast decaying overtures. Neither of them is very frequently played nowadays. Hearing them in these excellent performances, one can readily understand why. One is refined and dull, the other coarse and noisy. Two little poems by Goethe, *Meeres Stille* and *Glückliche Fahrt*, gave Mendelssohn the idea for the *Overture*, which was written in 1829. The first part of the work is supposed to represent a dead calm at sea; the more lively second section is the voyage. The first part is slow and dreary; the lively part strained and forced. The work comes to a close with a triumphant

trumpet blast, representing the ship coming to port. The adequate performance and good recording are not sufficient to offset the dullness of the music. The two familiar *Songs Without Words* on the odd side of the set are capably done.



The *Black Domino* Overture is more lively and noisy, and Dr. Blech and the London Symphony give it a rousing performance. But even so they can't alter the obvious fact that it is an insipid and hollow piece of music, of little interest to modern ears.

RIMSKY-KORSAKOW

V-DB1698

IMPORTED

THE SNOW MAIDEN: *Dance of the Tumblers*. One side and

IVAN THE TERRIBLE: *Storm Music*. One side. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Albert Coates. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

**BORODIN
RIMSKY-KORSAKOW**

V-DB1683

IMPORTED

PRINCE IGOR: *Polovtzi March*. (Borodin) One side and DOUBINUSHKA. (Arr. Rimsky-Korsakow) One side. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Albert Coates. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

It is pleasant to see Coates occupying a conspicuous place on the lists again, for there are not many other conductors who have contributed so largely and generously to the record collector's pleasure. Here, playing the sort of music which he always does so superlatively well, he offers four little pieces by Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakow. The *Dance of the Tumblers*, one of the most attractive of the lot, is a gay, vivacious piece, done with the utmost zest and spirit and recorded with extraordinary realism . . . The reverse side, offering the *Storm Music* from *Ivan the Terrible*, is less impressive. The music, the character of which is sufficiently indicated by the title, is hardly of much consequence. But for the effective orchestration and Coates' vigorous performance, one hearing would be sufficient.

Much more interesting is the *Polovtzi March*, which serves as the introduction to Act III of *Prince Igor*. A glowing, superbly vigorous piece of music, it is done with the gusto and energy the piece demands, and the record far outshines the early Columbia recording of the march, done by Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic. *Doubinushka* is apparently a folk-song. Like the *Storm Music*, it is empty and devoid of any interesting qualities; Rimsky's orchestration for once is commonplace and feeble. Here again Coates and the recorders do their job so well that the record acquires a mild charm that it otherwise would have lacked.

TSCHAIKOWSKY

V-DB1661

IMPORTED

MANFRED: *Scherzo*, Op. 58. Two sides. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Albert Coates. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Because Byron's dramatic poem, *Manfred*, was not "in harmony with his inner disposition," Mily Balakireff did not attempt to set the subject to music. But he thought a great deal about it, and in October, 1882, he wrote to Tchaikowsky,



urging him to compose a symphonic poem on the subject, so admirably suited to Tschaikowsky's temperament. He had made the same suggestion to Berlioz, but the French composer had declined on the grounds of his age and growing physical infirmities. Balakireff, in his letter to Tschaikowsky, even went so far as to outline the manner in which the subject should be treated. There should be a fixed idea, the Manfred motive, to appear throughout the work. The second movement, the only one recorded here, should portray the simple life of an Alpine hunter. "You must, of course, use a hunter's motive, but you should take the greatest care to avoid the trivial. God keep you from commonplaces after the manner of German fanfares and hunters' music." Tschaikowsky began work on the symphonic poem in April, 1885, several years after Balakireff had suggested the idea to him, and it was completed the following September. The composition, bearing the title *Manfred, Symphony in Four Tableaux, after the Dramatic Poem by Byron*, had presented him with many difficulties, and he often suffered periods of despair. But after the rehearsals and the first performance, Tschaikowsky cheered up and in a letter to a friend said: "I am very contented; I think it is my very best orchestral work." Even Cui, who had been violently opposed to Tschaikowsky's music, was greatly pleased with the symphonic poem and wrote in ecstatic terms of it.

It is too bad that the recorders should have reversed the usual procedure nowadays and given us only one movement from the piece. Were Tschaikowsky a less popular composer, this might be more understandable; perhaps the missing three movements will be released later. The second movement is a Scherzo, and the following note is given in the score: "The Fairy of the Alps appears to Manfred beneath the rainbow of the waterfall." Tschaikowsky's orchestration, nearly always ingenious and effective, is very impressive here, and the felicitous use of the woodwinds in particular is to be noted. After a stormy introduction, the first violins supported by the harps set forth a beautiful melody, the so-called Song of the Witch, designated in the score as a trio. Later the full orchestra, with the exception of the brass, joins in, and the music comes to an effective conclusion with a solo violin and a harp depicting the waterfall.

This disc makes an excellent companion piece to the seldom heard Third Symphony, noticed here last month. Though it is only an excerpt, it is an extraordinarily attractive one, presenting Tschaikowsky in one of his most appealing moments. A glowing and passionate performance is given the piece by Albert Coates and the London Symphony, and capital recording rounds out a splendidly produced record.

CHOPIN
V-DB1722
IMPORTED

{ FUNERAL MARCH. (Chopin-arr. Elgar) Two sides. B. B. C.
Symphony Orchestra conducted by Adrian Boult.
One 12-inch disc. \$2.

This is the first record of the British Broadcasting Company's new symphony orchestra about which there has been so much favorable comment. Made up of many of England's finest musicians, it is comparable to our best American orchestras in size and, so the correspondents say, in skill. Its regular conductor, Mr. Adrian Boult, is a musician of wide experience and has been associated for many years with the Birmingham orchestra. This first record of the new band hardly

permits of a fair comparison with the American orchestras; that will have to be done later, when records better adapted to display the organization's virtuosity are issued. The familiar Chopin Funeral March ordinarily would not constitute very appropriate material for a new orchestra to begin its recording work with. But the march is here given in an arrangement recently made by Sir Edward Elgar, and his transcription departs widely from those usually heard. It is an admirable piece of orchestration. Bold, full-blooded, brilliant, the march in this form is very impressive, with no suggestion of dullness or maudlin sentimentality. Elgar's bright and glittering orchestration may seem to some a bit excessive and theatrical; to us it comes as a welcome relief after the dreary arrangements usually heard. Sir Edward's transcription is vivid, fiery and forceful, yet it has dignity and poise and still remains a funeral march. The performance is crisp and vigorous; the strings especially show to excellent advantage, and the orchestra as a whole bears evidence of thorough drilling. The recording is properly full-blooded and brilliant.



VERDI { **IMMORTAL VERDI: *Potpourri*.** (Arr. Morena) Two sides.
V-V50045 { Marek Weber and his Orchestra. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

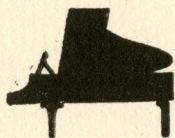
This is another of the Weber Orchestra's engaging potpourris. The tunes, of course, are excellent, and they are briskly set forth by this lively and very proficient little orchestra. The recording is good, as it very nearly always is in this organization's discs.

CONCERTO



PROKOFIEV { **CONCERTO NO. 3 in C Major, Op. 26.** Six sides. Serge
V-DB1725 { Prokofiev (Piano) and London Symphony Orchestra conducted
to by Piero Coppola. Three 12-inch discs. \$2 each.
V-DB1727 {
IMPORTED

In their flirtations with modern music, the phonograph companies abroad seem to have taken a particular fancy to works for piano and orchestra. Thus last spring His Master's Voice issued Dohnányi's Variations on a Nursery Song (modern only in the sense that it was written during the present century); last fall Columbia put out an attractive recording of Ravel's Piano Concerto; and now H.M.V. sends along Prokofiev's Concerto No. 3, with the composer himself at the piano. But apart from the fact that all three were written for piano and orchestra, no three works could be more dissimilar. The Dohnányi piece, a delightful work, was written in a manner calculated to please the more conservative. The Ravel toyed with jazz and was easily recognizable as coming from the French composer. As for the Prokofiev, it is an extraordinarily interesting recording, and will be commented upon at length in the February issue of *Disques* by Mr. Nicolas Slonimsky. Mr. Slonimsky, incidentally, wrote an article on Prokofiev which appeared in the issue for June, 1931.



PIANO

**GRANADOS
CHOPIN**

V-7403

GOYESCAS: *La Maja y el Ruisenor*. (Granados) One side and
MAZURKA in C Minor, Op. 56, No. 3. (Chopin) One side.
Arthur Rubinstein (Piano). One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Arthur Rubinstein, when playing Spanish music, is unfailingly impressive, and here he gives one of Granados' delightful pieces—the poetic *La Maja y el Ruisenor* from *Goyescas*. *Goyescas* derives its name from the fact that the pieces comprising it were named after scenes from the paintings and tapestries of the Spanish artist Goya. The Chopin Mazurka is beautifully played, too, and the recording throughout is clean-cut and crisp. Single records of piano selections seldom have much to offer beyond the more familiar and hackneyed pieces, but this disc offers music that is not only both unfamiliar and lovely but in addition is admirably presented.

LISZT

V-C2446

and

V-C2447

IMPORTED

HUNGARIAN RHAPSODY NO. 9. Three sides and
HUNGARIAN RHAPSODY NO. 4. One side. Mark Ham-
bourg (Piano). Two 12-inch discs. \$1.75 each.

Nearly everyone knows what to expect from a Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody, and those who like a swiftly-moving, crashing performance of these pieces will enjoy this new recording of two of the less familiar rhapsodies, recorded here apparently for the first time. No. 9 runs to three record sides and is built on a broader plan than the more modest No. 4, which fills out the set. There is ample opportunity here for a player to display his virtuosity, and Mr. Hambourg is quick to take advantage of it. He pounds furiously and forcefully, and the recording is appropriately loud and brilliant. Accepted for what they are, the records provide an enjoyable and exciting fifteen minutes.

MOZART

C-DX375

and

C-DX376

IMPORTED

SONATA IN C MAJOR. (K. 330) Four sides. Harriet Cohen
(Piano). Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Periodically—at intervals of every couple of months—during the past year or so, Columbia has been offering us a pair of piano records of extraordinary merit. One has only to recall such salient piano releases as the Gieseking discs of the Beethoven Op. 31, No. 2, his version of the Debussy *Suite Bergamasque*, and Harold Samuel's recording of the Bach Partita to establish the truth of this statement. One hesitates to place these two discs of Harriet Cohen's performance of Mozart's Sonata in C Major beside such lordly recordings, but they are nonetheless extremely beautiful piano records, well recorded, sensitively played and bring us, furthermore, a hitherto unrecorded work by Mozart. Reviewing the

new edition of Mozart's piano works in his New Music column last month, Mr. Maurice B. Katz attributed "much of the dislike and indifference to the sonatas and other works of one of the greatest masters of all time . . . to the wrong phrasing and general faulty interpretations of the average pianist."



Miss Cohen, it need scarcely be said, is by no means an average pianist, as her previous records afford abundant testimony. At the first hearing these records may seem to some a little thin and bloodless, lacking in color and body. Subsequent hearings will quickly dispel that feeling. There may be things to quarrel about in Miss Cohen's interpretation—lack of warmth in places, for example—but it is so well poised, so well phrased, and her touch is so fine that one hardly feels disposed to cavil. As for the music itself, it is excellent Mozart, graceful, serene, incomparably lovely. There is much to admire in the clean, quiet, altogether just and appropriate recording given Miss Cohen's performance.

OPERA



WAGNER
V-DB1720
and
V-DB1721
IMPORTED

DIE WALKÜRE: Act 2—*Fricka-Wotan Duet*. Four sides.
Friedrich Schorr (Baritone), Emmi Leisner (Mezzo-Soprano),
and London Symphony Orchestra conducted by John Barbirolli.
Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Wagner, seldom altogether absent from the lists, has been generously represented the past month or so. It is gratifying to note that nearly all the new records offer previously unrecorded material that bridges gaps already existing in the earlier albums. Here, for example, are two records giving the Wotan-Fricka debate from Act II of *Die Walküre*. This was one of the most conspicuous gaps in the Victor *Walküre* albums. The new records begin immediately after Brünnhilde leaves Wotan at the beginning of Act II. There is a short instrumental passage, and Wotan, noting Fricka's approach, mutters gloomily, *Der alte Sturm, die alte Mühl! Doch Stand muss ich hier halten!* We then have Fricka's competent upbraiding of the harassed god. Squarely on the side of righteousness, Fricka is properly indignant at Wotan's tolerance of the extraordinary conduct of Siegmund and Sieglinde. Wotan argues patiently and doggedly, but he is no match for Fricka's devastating logic, and so agrees not to help the pair. The music runs from page 89 of the vocal score to 111, where the second scene begins. On pages 107 and 108 Brünnhilde's shouts are omitted, but her approach is indicated in the orchestra.

It is scarcely necessary to add that Schorr is excellent as Wotan and that Emmi Leisner conveys Fricka's annoying prodding convincingly. The London Symphony, this time directed by John Barbirolli, supplies a well played accompaniment, and the recording is carefully done.



WAGNER
V-7691
to
V-7696

SIEGFRIED: *Selections from Acts 1 and 2*. Twelve sides.
Lauritz Melchior (Tenor), Heinrich Tessmer (Tenor), Eduard
Habich (Baritone), Friedrich Schorr (Baritone), with London
Symphony Orchestra conducted by Robert Heger.
Six 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-161. \$12.

V-DB1710
to
V-DB1713
IMPORTED

SIEGFRIED: Act 3—*Love Duet*. Lauritz Melchior (Tenor),
Florence Easton (Soprano), and Royal Opera Orchestra, Cov-
ent Garden, conducted by Robert Heger. Seven sides and
SIEGFRIED: *Prelude (In the Depths of the Forest)*. One side.
London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Robert Heger.
Four 12-inch discs in album. \$8.

Getting a complete *Siegfried* is a slow and somewhat tedious business, but if we keep up at the rate at which we have been going the work ought to be finished within a year or two. One advantage of this method of issuing the work is that it is a little easier on the pocketbook, since the financial outlay necessary is made by degrees instead of all at once. The Victor album is a repressing of the third H.M.V. set of *Siegfried* selections, noticed in *Disques* last April. The H.M.V. album listed here is the fourth set of excerpts the English company has issued. A couple of years ago Victor made up an album of the best records from the first two H.M.V. sets, and now by repressing these selections from Acts I and II the company fills in many of the gaps that existed in the earlier set. The first of the new records begins shortly before the rise of the curtain, and following this there are some thirty-two pages of the Mime-Siegfried scene recorded complete. On page 36 of the Schott vocal score occurs the first cut; Mime's explanation of Siegfried's birth and Sieglinde's death is missing, and the cut continues to Siegfried's *Soll ich der Kunde glauben* on page 42. Resuming here, the music continues to the end of the scene. The sixth record face gives us the arrival of the Wanderer and continues, with cuts, down to the bottom of page 64. The last two records set forth material from Act II. They begin with Alberich's first words and continue, with minor cuts, to the entrance of Mime and Siegfried. The first side of the last record begins on page 185 and takes in Siegfried's encounter with Fafner, ending with the death of the latter on page 194. The material from the bottom of page 190 to the top of 194 is omitted. The final side gives us the Mime-Alberich debate, beginning on 198 and ending on 208. No one will experience any difficulty in fitting these new records into the earlier Victor album.

It would be a difficult task to assemble a more satisfactory cast for *Siegfried* than that employed in these records. Tessmer as Mime, Habich as Alberich, Melchior as Siegfried, and Schorr as Wotan—these are all thoroughly experienced and qualified Wagnerian singers, and their work in this album proves their reputations to be well deserved. The orchestral part, played by the London Symphony under Robert Heger (one of the best of the Wagnerian conductors now appearing on records), comes through magnificently. One of the most serious criticisms made of previous *Ring* records is that the orchestra so often is sacrificed at the expense of the singers; too often the balance is poorly adjusted, and much of the

important orchestral writing is obscured or drowned out by singers too close to the microphone. This criticism hardly applies here; the balance, in the main, is excellent, and the orchestra is given sufficient prominence.



The odd side of the new H.M.V. album gives the hitherto unrecorded Prelude to the music drama, and the music continues to the point where the first of the records in the Victor album begins, shortly before the rising of the curtain. The remaining seven sides of the new set give us in complete form the duet between Siegfried and Brünnhilde which concludes the music drama. Beginning on page 296 with the orchestral passage that precedes Brünnhilde's *Heil dir, Sonne!* the music continues uncut to the falling of the curtain. This duet, it will be recalled, was included, in cut form, in the first Victor album, recorded and sung rather unsatisfactorily by Rudolph Laubenthal and Frida Leider. Those records were the weakest in that set, so that the new recording, even though a duplication, was badly needed.

Melchior is always an admirable Siegfried, and Florence Easton, making her début in this series, sings Brünnhilde's part with warmth and feeling. The accompaniment throughout is beautifully played and recorded, and the seven sides give us at last a phonographic version of the duet that is in all respects satisfactory. Wagnerians with the price will do well to substitute these four discs for the two inferior records that concluded the first Victor album. Eliminating these two discs but counting in the first eight records of the Victor set, the six in the new Victor set, and the four in the new H.M.V., one now has eighteen records from the music drama, comprising the major portion of the score.

WAGNER
V-7682

{ DIE MEISTERSINGER: (a) *Quintet—Selig, wie die Sonne meines Glückes*; (b) *Euch macht ihr's leicht*. Two sides. Schorr, Schumann, Melchior, Parr, Williams and London Symphony Orchestra. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

This is a coupling of two *Meistersinger* records issued last year by H.M.V. They were noticed in an article on *Meistersinger* records published in *Disques* last January. Side one sets forth the magnificent Quintet from Act III. The voices blend beautifully and the recording is all that could be desired. The reverse side contains the music that Sachs sings as he thanks the assembled crowd of trade guilds, tailors, shoemakers, bakers and youthful apprentices gathered on the banks of the River Pegnitz. The chorale which precedes the *Euch macht ihr's leicht*, incidentally, is available on Victor 9160, sung by the Chorus and Orchestra of the Berlin State Opera conducted by Leo Blech. This is a fine record and belongs in any collection of records from the music drama. The music on the reverse side of the disc above begins where V-9160 left off. Schorr, as usual, is a persuasive and eloquent Sachs, and a fine accompaniment is provided by the London Symphony. John Barbirolli conducts the accompaniment for the Quintet, while Lawrance Collingwood directs that on the reverse side. This is as good a place as any to tack on a line reminding the companies that *Die Meistersinger* has yet to be recorded in full, and that a very appropriate time for such a collection of records to be released would be in the next couple of months, to tie in with the fiftieth anniversary of Wagner's death.

**VERDI**

V-C2413

to

V-C2428

IMPORTED

OTELLO: Opera in 4 Acts. Thirty-two sides. Italian Operatic Artists, La Scala Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Carlo Sabajno. Sixteen 12-inch discs in album. \$28.

With the recent recording of *Falstaff* and the release of *Otello* this month, all of Verdi's most important operas have been recorded in complete form, and some of them, indeed, are available in two versions. One may now hear on the phonograph the following Verdi operas in complete form: *Il Trovatore*, *Traviata*, *Rigoletto*, *Aida*, *Otello* and *Falstaff*. *Ernani*, for those who are curious about it, may be heard in an abridged version. Glancing over this list, surely no one can deny that Verdi's genius has been abundantly recognized by the phonograph companies; few opera seasons, in fact, bring forth performances of all these works done as competently as they are done here. Nor does the above list take into consideration the countless discs of excerpts that have always been conspicuous in the catalogues.

Most people will agree that *Falstaff* and *Otello* were Verdi's supreme achievements, and hence it is fortunate that the companies delayed recording them until reproduction had been developed to the point where something properly describable as justice could be done them. Like *Falstaff*, *Otello* was written during Verdi's old age, surely one of the most astonishing and fruitful old ages on record. Losing none of its youthful freshness and spontaneity, his music acquired an added refinement and polish, a subtlety and eloquence of expression that were not present in the early works. There is all the fire and gusto of the early Verdi here, but it is used more sparingly and intelligently, and the effect is infinitely more impressive.

Otello came sixteen years after *Aida*, that is to say, in 1887, and some six years before *Falstaff*, his last opera. Boïto, who later on was to supply Verdi with a superb libretto for *Falstaff*, also provided the one for *Otello*, basing it, of course, on Shakespeare's work. "We may regard it as a piece of good fortune for Verdi that he did not meet Boïto earlier in his career," says Ernest Newman in his *Stories of the Great Operas*. "He would no doubt have had one or two better Shakespearean libretti than that of the *Macbeth* of 1847, but he himself, at that time, would not have been musically ripe for them. The gods acted wisely in keeping the thirty-years-younger Boïto in reserve for him till he had attained to complete mastery of his ideas and his technique." Boïto, in adapting the work for operatic purposes, made considerable alterations, eliminating, for example, Shakespeare's opening scenes in Venice and beginning with *Otello* and Desdemona already married. But whatever changes he was forced to effect were done with considerable skill, and the result is a swiftly moving, highly dramatic, and soundly constructed operatic libretto—one of the few genuinely distinguished works of its kind.

The cast for this recording is distributed as follows: *Otello*, Nicolai Fusati; *Iago*, Apollo Granforte; *Cassio*, Piero Girardi; *Roderigo*, Nello Palai; *Desdemona*, Maria Carbone; *Emilia*, T. Beltacchi. The chorus and orchestra are those of La Scala, conducted by Carlo Sabajno. It is a good cast, well balanced and composed of some excellent singers, and the opera moves forward with precision and vigor. The outstanding performance undoubtedly is Apollo Granforte's singing of the rôle of the treacherous *Iago*. All of the hate and spite and bitterness that fill *Iago's*

soul are cogently communicated by Granforte. He makes as effective and subtle a villain as one could wish. The famous Credo—Boïto's idea—in which Iago gives voice to his unwholesome philosophy is finely done. Far less impressive but not unsatisfactory is Nicolai Fusati's *Otello*. His voice is by no means remarkable, but it is not unpleasant and he sings intelligently. The love-duet at the end of Act I is marred a bit by his labored singing, and his difficult entrance at the beginning of the opera is not so impressive as it might be. But elsewhere he acquits himself very creditably. Maria Carbone's *Desdemona* is excellent. She has a pleasing voice, and her mournful little Willow song, concluding so unexpectedly and poignantly with the sudden cry "Emilia, farewell!" comes off effectively.

The chorus and orchestra are always good in these Italian operatic recordings, and this set is no exception. The recording is consistently excellent throughout the set. As *Falstaff* marked perhaps the highest achievement of the Italian Columbia operatic recordings, so *Otello* may be said to represent the finest work of this sort that Italian H. M. V. has given us.

**WAGNER
LORTZING**
V-EG2542
IMPORTED

DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER: *Steuermannslied*. (Wagner) One side and
ZAR UND ZIMMERMANN: *Lebe wohl, mein flandrisch mädchen*. (Lortzing) One side. Marcel Wittrisch (Tenor), Irene Eisinger (Soprano) and Berlin State Opera Chorus and Orchestra. One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

The first side of this little record contains some extremely exciting and impressive recording that is very realistic. The music is the Steersman's Song from the *Flying Dutchman*. Wittrisch sings it admirably, and near the end there is some excellent chorus work, superbly recorded here. The orchestra, too, is extraordinarily fine. . . . But the Lortzing selection is much less attractive. The music is rather dull, and the excellent work of the two soloists, Marcel Wittrisch and Irene Eisinger, and the chorus is not sufficient to overcome that handicap. But the disc is well worth having just for the *Flying Dutchman* number.

WAGNER
V-DA1227
IMPORTED

DIE MEISTERSINGER: *Am stillen Herd in Winterzeit*. One side and
DIE WALKÜRE: *Winterstürme wichen dem wonnemond*. One side. Lauritz Melchior (Tenor) and London Symphony Orchestra. One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

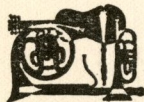
It is too bad that Melchior wasn't given less familiar material to sing on this little disc than the *Meistersinger* and *Walküre* selections, both of which are available on the domestic lists. The *Meistersinger* piece, in fact, is one of the few parts of the music drama that has caught the attention of the recorders, and there are numerous versions of it in the domestic and foreign catalogues. The *Walküre* selection is likewise a familiar phonographic item and stood in no pressing need of a new recording. At any rate, Melchior's singing is as fine as usual, and the recording and accompaniments are well done. John Barbirolli conducts the *Walküre* and Lawrence Collingwood the *Meistersinger*.



CILÈA
SCHIPA
V-7583

L'ARLESIANA: *Lamento di Federico*. (Francesco Cilèa) One side and
PRECE (*A Prayer*). One side. Tito Schipa (Tenor) with orchestra. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Francesco Cilèa, born at Palmi, Calabria, in 1866, is a composer not very familiar to those who listen to music by means of the phonograph. In 1881, after studying with Francesco Florimo, a friend of Verdi, he entered the Naples Conservatorio, studying the pianoforte with Beniamino Cesi and counterpoint and composition with Paolo Serrao. His first opera, *Gina*, was first produced in 1889, while he was still at the Conservatorio. So successful was the work that Sonzogno, the publisher, commissioned Cilèa to write another opera, *La Tilda*, which, when produced in 1892, was received with similar enthusiasm. *L'Arlesiana*, from which the above selection was taken, was produced in 1896. In three acts, it is founded upon Alphonse Daudet's drama. It was in this work that Caruso made his first appearance in Milan. The music is said to be charming, revealing ingenious use of folk tunes, but the work was received rather coldly. This has been attributed to the poor libretto, the reason so often advanced when an opera is unsuccessful. The excerpt given here is pleasant but not particularly striking. The subdued accompaniment is attractive, and Schipa sings with commendable restraint. The reverse side sets forth one of Schipa's own compositions, called *A Prayer*. The addition of the organ to the accompaniment provides the proper note of piety, but one leaves the piece feeling that Schipa is a far better singer than he is a composer. The recording in both pieces is finely done.



MISCELLANEOUS

V-30722
to
V-30724

SPANISH TALES AND DIALOGUES. Six sides. Señorita de Laguna, Señor Barragán, Señor Camilio Gurtubay, Señor de Baeza. Three 10-inch discs. 75c each.

V-V6207
to
V-V6209

GERMAN TALES AND DIALOGUES. Six sides. Fräulein Cläre von Both, Herr von Nussbaum, Herr Schäffer. Three 10-inch discs. 75c each.

Well recorded specimens of Spanish and German dialogue and recitation. Leaflets, giving in each instance the German, Spanish and English of the material set forth on the records, add to the usefulness of the sets.





CORRESPONDENCE



Elgar

Editor, *Disques*:

It has been a source of satisfaction to those of us in England who see *Disques* to find that there is an appreciation of the finer Elgar in the United States.

Those of us who value Elgar's music have long known that our regard is not shared abroad, but there is a peculiar consolation in this matter. This music is distinctly English in fibre, quite distinct from the meaningless description, "British" (which no good Englishman likes), and, as such, it enjoys isolation. Foreign conductors can make nothing of Elgar unless he is translated into the idioms of Brahms or Wagner, when, of course, he is not heard at his best.

The fact, then, that *Disques* has given expressions of regard for Elgar's finer works is a tribute to the perspicacity of the modern independent American judgement. The fact that so utterly English and insular a work as Elgar's *Falstaff* was enthusiastically commented upon by *Disques* is an indication of, at least, the receptivity and balance of American musical criticism.

You have also been cute in noting that Elgar has written music that depends on little more than his attractive mannerism, and, as such, has limited musical value. In so noting, you have mentioned that certain English writers are unbalanced in their praise of Elgar. Here, again, you are perfectly right; but may I add that the more responsible men here are quite aware that there is good and bad Elgar, but we do not know why he himself shows lack of discrimination in gramophone recordings, unless it is that he has an amiable regard for his less impressive children.

Your November criticism of *In the South* was, I think, a little puzzling, though sincere. This work which you thought cold, I, as an old and calculating student of Elgar, believe to be warm; but he is working in an adopted idiom—some outside inspiration—and it may be that he is thus less quickly recognisable by you. At least, a word should be said for the gorgeous orchestration.

In conclusion, may I add that *Disques* is frequently indicated for the worth of its articles by our learned and international musical

magazine here, *The Chesterian*, to which I have the honour to contribute the gramophone pages.

JOHN F. PORTE

London, England.

The Phonograph Triumphs Over the Automobile

Editor, *Disques*:

I have just finished reading the editorial in the November issue of *Disques* and find myself so in sympathy with myself that I wish to thank you for arousing such feeling in me.

I have for some years cried and wept with managers of all record shops in New York about the unsightly, gigantic machines, the quality of whose reproduction was not of the best, urging the plain, simple, small cabinet either of an electrical or acoustical nature. The managers have invariably patted me on the shoulder and assured me that I did not know what I was talking about and that these fine, up-standing Victorian rococos were just the things to make an early-American house, well furnished with fine furniture and chintzes, more livable and homelike.

Please, Mr. Editor, when a machine such as you describe becomes available, let me know, and if it is too expensive, I shall sell my automobile and buy one.

A. W.

New York, N. Y.

The Speaking Voice

Editor, *Disques*:

I am an interested reader of your excellent magazine. Its arrival is awaited eagerly each month. The reviews and articles are among the best being published in any record magazine. The fine style of printing commends it to the reader, also.

I have observed with pleasure the great forward strides in recording and reproducing the best in music achieved during the past few years. But it seems to me that there is one important field in which the phono-

[Continued on page 493]

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[Continued on page 491]

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Correspondence (Continued)

graph is failing to reach its possibilities—that of the recording and reproducing of the spoken word. I realize that most attempts in the past have been unkind to the speaking voice. However, the Guitry albums in French and the John Barrymore disc proved that this sort of thing can be done effectively. I understand that Vachel Lindsay made recordings of his inimitable interpretation of his more popular poems. These records are not generally available. They should be. They possess

great value and interest for the teacher and student of speech and literature, as well as for lovers of poetry. I believe there would be a large enough demand from these groups to justify the general issuance of the records. To continue work in this field—why not some Edna St. Vincent Millay lyrics, read by Miss Millay herself? Poetry, like music, is meant for the ear.

E. A. HENSLEY

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NEW MUSIC

"THE FOURTH OF JULY": *Tone Poem for Full Orchestra*. By Charles Ives. New Music Orchestra Series, Vol. I, 1932. San Francisco: *New Music*.

The preface to the score contains the following elucidation of the program: "It's a boy's 'Fourth'—no historical orations—no patriotic grandiloquences by 'grown-ups'—no program in his yard! But he knows what he is celebrating—better than some of the county politicians. And he goes at it in his own way, with a patriotism nearer kin to nature than jingoism. His festivities start in the quiet of the midnight before and grow raucous with the sun. Everybody knows what it's like. The day ends with the sky-rocket over the church-steeple, just after the annual explosion sets the Town-Hall on fire."

The program certainly explains the reason for the most horrible cacaphony imaginable throughout the score. The violins are in some places divided into twenty-four parts, a semitone apart from each other, and run along like that in rapid passages for pages. The violas, 'cellos and basses are also subdivided into seven parts or less each, while the pianist has to indulge in all kinds of pyrotechnics with tone-clusters. Snatches of *Yankee Doodle*, *Dixie* and other tunes are taken up by different instruments in comical distortions, portraying the American holiday realistically. Presumably the services of at least several conductors would be required during rehearsals of the composition, since the polyrhythmic complications are amazing, some groups of instruments having different time-signatures from others. No music is more typically "American" in the true sense of the term than Ives', since it deals entirely with American subject matter and is expressed in a highly original fashion.

A SEQUENCE OF FIVE CHORUSES FOR MIXED VOICES. By Randall Thompson. Boston: *E. C. Schirmer Music Co.* 75c.

These highly amusing and satiric choruses are set to the words from five excerpts from "Americana" of the *American Mercury*. The

text is comical enough, but the mock-realistic portrayal of the music is side-splitting. The following is actually sung by the chorus to the accompaniment of pompous fortissimo chords: [Washington—Christian sentiment of the Rev. Dr. Mark Matthews, veteran instrument of the Lord in Seattle, as reported by the *Post-Intelligencer*] "May every tongue be paralyzed and every hand palsied that utters a word or raises a finger from this pulpit in advocacy of Modernism." For the first time American "boobocracy" has received a musical castigation, which it deserved long ago.

MISSA BREVIS for *Alto Voice, Violin and 'Cello*, Op. 22. By Hermann Reutter. New York: *Associated Music Publishers, Inc.* (*Schott Ed.*) \$3.

This admirable little mass consists of five movements: (1) Kyrie; (2) Gloria; (3) Credo; (4) Sanctus; (5) Agnus dei. The same thematic material appears throughout the movements, which are to be played without stops between them. It is a remarkable demonstration of how much can be expressed by two string instruments which are not used as mere accompaniment to the voice part but are independent parts of a trio. The music is rich with contrapuntal devices in the modern spirit, which nevertheless never fail to express the religious atmosphere and devotional character of the text.

CONCERTO FOR PIANO, Op. 38. By Ernst Toch. New York: *Associated Music Publishers, Inc.* (*Schott Ed.*) \$4.

Like all of Toch's compositions, the Concerto is a sparkling, bright, scintillating work, full of bravura passages and glissandos, with contrasting lyrical episodes. The polytonality and atonality do not baffle even the unsophisticated listener, as the rhythmic designs of the themes make them stand out prominently and distinctly, making each movement easy to follow. The third movement especially, Rondo disturbato, has the form and spirit of a Mozart rondo, in spite of the dissonant clashes of tonalities.

MAURICE B. KATZ

BOOKS

THE VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE IN PIANO TECHNIQUE: A Digest. By Tobias Matthay. London: *Oxford University Press* (*Agents in U. S. A., Carl Fischer, Inc., New York*). \$2.50.

Tobias Matthay was born in London on February 19, 1858. He has evolved a technique of piano playing known as the "Matthay System," now widely used. In 1903 his *The Act of Touch*, closely analyzing the pianist's touch, appeared, and it was followed by such works as *The First Principles of Pianoforte Playing*, *Relaxation Studies*, *Method in Teaching and Musical Interpretation*. Necessarily, a man with so many ideas on his subject would be bound to stir up considerable controversy, and in this latest volume, subtitled *A Digest*, he attempts to sum up the main points of his method and so prevent further misunderstanding and distortion of his teachings. "I feel," he says, "the time has now come when all this material should be gathered together, for the convenience of teacher and learner, and also to prevent misunderstanding as to what my teachings really are today." The volume, as may be surmised, is intended principally for pianists, teachers and students.

PROBLEMS IN PUBLIC SCHOOL MUSIC. By Jacob Kwalwasser. New York: *M. Witmark & Sons*. \$2.

Dr. Kwalwasser's stimulating book should be placed in the hands of all public school teachers of music. What he has to say may astound the majority of them, but it ought to have a salubrious effect on them and so eventually on their harassed pupils. This from the preface sets the pace of the volume: "I have no special desire to avoid the charges of iconoclasm and skepticism. Music education needs light, direction and a new evaluation. It has defeated itself by its failure to produce a constructive philosophy of its ultimate values, and all too frequently sacrifices the worth-while for the worthless. It has failed to distinguish between the vocational and the avocational objectives. It has sub-

stituted the drudgery of music reading and the acquisition of skills for the art of music. It has overlooked the importance of desire and the will to achieve. It has avoided the artistic and æsthetic for inferior results in the questionable field of discipline, and the more 'educational' music is being taught in the lower grades, the more the affections of children for music are being alienated . . . I have no ready-made solution for our difficulties. Bad and poorly integrated music cannot be converted into worthwhile educational material. The constant thwarting of desire to hear and produce good music cannot give the child pleasure in music. Bad teaching practices and the overemphasis of the technical and the academic factors in music must of necessity be ruinous. I have attempted to vitalize music education by giving it a tenable philosophy and indicating many needed reforms. The ultimate purpose of art education is loftier reality and the striving for perfection and beauty. Grovelling in the maze of staff notation is not only a cheerless chore but a base and worthless activity for most children in our public schools . . . We need reforms. We must depart from the old and entertain new ideals, materials and procedures." There is only room to say here that Dr. Kwalwasser's volume lives up to the high promises indicated in the preface.

CHORAL MUSIC AND ITS PRACTICE. By Noble Cain. New York: *M. Witmark & Sons*. \$2.

Mr. Cain is the director of the Chicago A Cappella Choir (the organization which sang Carpenter's *Song of Faith*, recently issued by Victor). His book is thus the result of wide experience and deep knowledge of the subject. It is addressed principally to the conductors of choral organizations, and special attention is devoted to a *cappella* singing. It is filled with a number of useful suggestions, many of them of a practical nature. At the end there is a bibliography and a list of selected *a cappella* compositions, arranged by periods.

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